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ABSTRACT

Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) Trends are analyses of higher education literature contained in the ERIC database, describing major concerns in institutional practice. Perhaps no other trend has grown as rapidly as the literature on external constituencies, outreach, and public relations. This increase makes it clear that higher education institutions are focused on ways to develop relationships with businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, communities, and political organizations. These partnerships are commonly referred to as the "responsive university" or "engaged campus." Typically outreach was seen as being important to a democratic society and for improving the economy. These traditional arguments have been refined to be responsive to the new knowledge society, economy, and political system with a focus on: (1) the responsive university; (2) multidisciplinary research; (3) business partnerships; (4) K-16 partnerships; and (5) international outreach. Many institutions are developing models to serve as guides for developing partnerships. As partnerships become implemented, a balance between traditional academic values and the different value systems of outside groups must be found. External partnerships should not be limited to the local community. Emphasis should be placed on building an infrastructure for collaboration on international outreach. The social value of colleges and universities to prepare young people for their roles in society as it exists today and creating a new and potentially better society must be acknowledged. (Contains 11 references.) (EMS)

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ERIC TRENDS 1999-2000:

EXTERNAL CONSTITUENCIES, OUTREACH, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

by Adrianna J. Kezar

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What are ERIC Trends?

Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) Trends are analyses of higher education literature contained in the ERIC Database. These analyses describe major concerns in institutional practice, helping researchers identify new areas for research, areas where further understanding is needed, and any gaps in the literature. For practitioners, ERIC Trends place individual institutional shifts in practice into a larger context. They provide individual institutions with examples of other institutions that are trying to make the same changes and help institutions identify other areas they should consider for change.

Slightly more than half of the literature summarized in ERIC Trends is drawn from higher education journals. The remainder of the literature summarized includes conference papers and documents published by educational associations, institutional research offices, research centers, consortia, and state and federal associations and boards. The literature is produced by both the research and practice communities. It is a combination of current theory and research, such as conference papers and Internet documents, and more dated literature, such as books and journal articles, which take several years to evolve from acceptance to publication. A limitation of this analysis is that it relies on the literature ERIC is able to obtain from authors and organizations; some groups may be unwilling to share information and, therefore, are not represented in the analysis. The range of documents analyzed in the ERIC Trends is fairly comprehensive, however.

To retrieve the literature for analysis, all of the higher education literature in the ERIC database was searched by the ERIC descriptors that reflect the most important topics in higher education: college faculty; college students (including foreign students); finance; college instruction (including academic advising); curriculum; program evaluation; policy and governance; legal issues; professional development; college administration (including educational facilities); higher education and the public good; and professional and graduate education. A quantitative analysis compared the current number of documents within a particular category to earlier years (back to 1986). A qualitative analysis of content was conducted on ERIC abstracts to identify recurring themes.

Higher Education Trends (1999-2000):
External Constituencies, Outreach and Public Relations

by Adrianna J. Kezar

Perhaps no other trend has grown as rapidly as the literature on external constituencies, outreach, and public relations. External relations and partnerships have not been a major emphasis until recently. Two new journals: Journal of Public Service & Outreach and the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning reflect the growing trend toward partnerships and external outreach as crucial to the mission of higher education. The journal, *Metropolitan Universities*, also highlights affiliations with the community. Almost every journal or magazine had a theme issues on partnerships and external outreach over the last two years. Clearly higher education institutions are focused on ways to develop relationships with businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, communities and political organizations. These various partnerships have been described by many authors as the rise of the "responsive university" or "engaged campus."

In addition to the increased volume of literature on external relations, the nature of the discussion has changed. Typically outreach was seen as important to a democratic society and for improving the economy. These traditional arguments have been refined into a comprehensive notion of a new university, responsive to the new knowledge society, economy, and political system. The major themes highlighted below will be:

1. The responsive university
2. Multi- disciplinary research
3. Business partnerships
4. K-16 partnerships
5. International outreach.

The Responsive University and Engaged Campus

Although community colleges and urban institutions have always emphasized partnerships with the community, the new trend is for state and land grant colleges to focus on enhancing these relationships. In addition, there is a renewed interest among urban universities. These institutions find themselves attempting to return to their roots at the turn of the last century as service providers. Several forces have resulted in this new emphasis on responsiveness: revenue shortfalls, changes in the workforce and the workplace, the impact of technology, new expectations of the public, and new notions of an academic community that expand beyond campus walls. Institutions appear to be rethinking their missions, especially in light of critiques that most institutions began to try to emulate research universities after World War II, relinquishing the service commitment to the new sector of community colleges.

One report highlighted "interactive institutions" that have developed partnerships with civic, business, and political leaders to build better communities. Each profile provides a brief history of the school and its historical mission, provides data on funding and organization, discusses faculty roles, and describes its outreach programs. The profiles illustrate student and faculty community

involvement, how cooperative extension programs have been expanded to serve a larger public, and how curriculums are being modified to make institutions more student-centered. Profiles are provided for: (1) Arizona State University; (2) Iowa State University; (3) Ohio State University; (4) Pennsylvania State University; (5) Portland (Oregon) State University; (6) Rutgers the State University of New Jersey; (7) Salish Kootenai College and the Flathead Indian Reservation; (8) Tuskegee University (Alabama); (9) University of California at Davis; (10) University of Illinois at Chicago; and (11) University of Vermont (Engaged Institutions: A Commitment to Service).

Many institutions are developing models that can serve as guides for the precarious path to partnerships. Most studies have illustrated both promise as well as perils, therefore, it is important to carefully plan and implement such partnerships (Tierney, W. G.) For example, most writings on the responsive university emphasize what needs to be retained within the traditional academic environment, including academic freedom, access and equity, excellence and integrity, and dedication to inquiry (Tierney, W. G.). These values must be upheld and reinforced as higher education partners with other groups representing different value systems. Although higher education should be open to other values systems, such as the business communities' entrepreneurship, some traditional academic values need to be maintained.

Multi-disciplinary Research

Complementary to the trend toward being responsive to the community is the trend toward multi-disciplinary, problem-based research. Many scholars have critiqued traditional research methods, based in a single discipline, for being inadequate to understand complex problems in the real world. Increasingly, research projects are being conducted in teams, e.g., sociology, biology, anthropology, religious studies, and physics, addressing community and societal issues. One dilemma noted, however, has been the reward system in higher education, which continues to reward traditional research done by one individual in a single discipline and that is not applied. A recent study involving 32 diverse institutions offer insights into what motivates college faculty involvement in public service and outreach efforts, what faculty find to be obstacles to involvement, and what institutions can do to facilitate involvement (Holland, B. A.).

Another aspect of multi-disciplinary research is the growth of public policy centers and institutes, becoming a more visible part of many universities. A cross between think tanks and academic units that provide public service, they focus on policy research and facilitation of public discourse. A national survey reveals faculty's role in their work, the applied multi-disciplinary nature of their activities, and their impact on public policy-making (Melnick, R.). This can serve as a model approach, encouraging this type of research on campus. This trend will, most likely, continue to be stifled until the issue of faculty rewards is dealt with by campuses and disciplinary societies.

Business Partnerships

Business partnerships have a long history in higher education. Although these relationships have been mentioned in the literature over the years, the character of the writing has been modified. For example, literature is now examining the nature of the relationship between higher educationand business (through such vehicles as the Business Higher Education Forum, hosted by the American

Council on Education) rather than just advocating for these partnerships to occur. One report examined workplace transition, noting that although business and higher education agree on the importance of changes in this transition, major differences exist between how these two sectors propose to accomplish such improvements. It is suggested that while these differences can be spanned, a greater chasm exists between the challenges of a changing global environment and the strategies necessary to arm graduates with needed skills in today's ambiguous work world. Recommendations focus on translating principles into local action and address: (1) the need for students to develop flexible and cross-functional skill sets, such as leadership, teamwork, problem solving, time management, communication and analytical thinking; (2) the need for students to develop such personal traits as ethics, adaptability, self-management, and global consciousness; (3) the need for a business-higher education collaborative process for restructuring curricula and teaching methods; (4) the need to provide more opportunities for college students to apply theoretical concepts; (5) the need for university career service advisors to build linkages to corporate recruiters; and (6) the need to include faculty in the academic- corporate dialogue and to focus on practical action-oriented items. (Business-Higher Education Forum). This new literature helps move beyond the early arguments simply for the need to collaborate, examining some of the problems in perspectives and partnership efforts.

K-16 Partnerships

Outreach to school systems also has a long history in higher education, dating back to the 1800s. However, in the past several decades, the relationship between schools and higher education has languished. Through several national and state initiatives, this has changed and schools and colleges are now in dialogue with each other, reaffirming their interdependent nature (Bernhardt, J. J). A great deal of literature reinforced this relationship and provided ideas about why it was important to partner as well as models for partnerships. For example, one monograph examined state initiatives to create educational structures that more closely align K-12 and postsecondary education (Tafel, J., & Eberhart, N.).

Another document critically examined efforts to reform public education by multiple strategies such as collaboration with institutions of higher education, states and local school systems initiatives, and federal government programs. It suggests that many K-12 reform policies are moving secondary and postsecondary education in disparate directions. Problems identified include a lack of authentic measures for student assessment in relation to college preparation; misalignment between secondary student preparation and college admissions and placement standards; placement of many students in remedial classes; and low retention and completion rates of students at many public institutions (Kirst, M. W.) Research on K-16 partnerships is helping to discover the most appropriate ways that colleges and schools can work together. It is time for practitioners to use this knowledge base to improve their working relations.

International Outreach

Outreach and external relations used to focus mostly on the local community or on the state, but many institutions are beginning to think about outreach on a continuum. This provides a place for dialogues about international outreach, which is often left out of discussions or marginalized to a

particular division that is focused on foreign students or study abroad. A particular emphasis is being placed on building an infrastructure for cooperation and collaboration on international outreach (Jischke, M. C.).

Washington State University is a model institution for international outreach activities in economic development, research, and education. The authors of one article propose that international outreach is essential in order for modern universities to meet their responsibilities, serve their constituencies, and survive in a rapidly changing educational environment (Noel, J. C., & Henson, J. B.) Activities that universities can develop to help individuals and organizations prepare for the challenges of today's interconnected international environment include promoting international business capacity, creating networks to raise awareness of global trends, supporting elementary/secondary school global education, encouraging international community service, recruiting international students, and building partnerships with community organizations (Peterson, N. J.). Each university and college is thinking about a broader role in outreach than previously. Although many people are reciting the importance of international outreach, few studies have been conducted on the impact of such programs, illustrating their benefits for campuses.

Collaboration was noted as an important trend in a prior ERIC Trend (See Higher Education and the Public Good). Collaboration remained a theme across all the literature whether it was faculty working collaboratively with the community, students working on service learning projects, college wide collaboration, or administrative work in teams. However, one problem with this literature is that collaboration tends to be portrayed as a panacea for working through challenges on campuses. Collaboration is important, but needs to be combined with other strategies.

Conclusion: Balancing Claims for Outreach

Yet for all this emphasis on external relations, there is not as much needed dialogue about balancing competing claims for time and resources. A college or university works best when society's leaders acknowledge the social value of respecting and honoring both its functions preparing young people for their roles in society as it exists, and preparing the ground for a new and potentially better society. This perspective is important in balancing the university's response to market pressures in higher education.

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